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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LH](#)  
SUBJECT: LITHUANIA: THREE-PARTY COALITION REGROUPS

REF: A. VILNIUS 357

[1](#)B. 05 VILNIUS 1320

Classified By: Pol/Econ Officer Nancy Cohen  
for reasons 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Leaders of Lithuania's Social Democrat, Labor, and Farmers parties signed an agreement April 12 to govern as a coalition following Parliament's removal of parliamentary chairman Paulauskas and the withdrawal of his New Union party from the government. Under the agreement, Prime Minister Brazauskas will remain in power. The Parliament on April 13 elected Labor Party nominee Viktor Muntianas -- up until now deputy Parliamentary chairman --- as its new chairman. Machinations continue over filling the Foreign and Social Welfare ministries that Paulauskas's party had filled, with both President Adamkus and Brazauskas publicly urging retention of the incumbents. Brazauskas has deferred all action to fill these Cabinet seats until after the Easter holidays, while the three governing parties look for potential small-party partners to increase their tiny majority in the parliament. Despite the internal shenanigans, Lithuanian foreign policy remains so far unshaken. End Summary.

One Down, Three Remain: Coalition Continues to Rule  
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[1](#)2. (U) Social Democratic leader Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas, Labor Party's Viktor Uspaskich, and Farmers' Party head Agriculture Minister Kazimieras Prunskiene signed an agreement April 12 to reconstitute a coalition of the three parties. The reconstituted coalition recognizes the withdrawal of the New Union from the Government in the aftermath of the removal of NU Speaker Arturas Paulauskas in a secret ballot no-confidence vote on April 10 (ref A). Despite Uspaskich's earlier announcement that he would seek the post of prime minister, Brazauskas will retain the position. The coalition partners also agreed to support the election of Labor candidate Viktoras Muntianas, which the Parliament carried out in a vote of 75 to 56 on April 13.

New Union Ministers Fates on Hold  
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[1](#)3. (U) The coalition has been slower, however, in filling the two positions in Government that NU members FM Antanas Valionis and Social and Labor Minister Vilija Blinkeviciute currently fill. The New Union officially recalled its ministers upon withdrawing from the Government, but Brazauskas said he will defer taking action until after Easter, while both Adamkus and Brazauskas have urged efforts to retain the two popular ministers in government.

Brazauskas told the media that he intended to ask Blinkeviciute to suspend her New Union membership to enable her to retain her Cabinet position. The PM had "nothing concrete" to say about the future of foreign minister slot, but Adamkus on April 14 urged that Valionis remain on at least until after the summit meeting of new democracies in Vilnius on May 4. Brazauskas ruled out press speculation that Minister of Agriculture Prunskiene would gain the foreign ministry. According to "diplomatic sources," Lithuanian ambassador to the United States, Vygaudas Usackas, was up for the post, but Labor Party leader Uspaskich denied Usackas was under consideration. Labor Party MP Jadvyga Zinkeviciute told us, however, that her party is not out of the picture. April 19, she said, the party fraction will convene to discuss the matter of replacing the two ministers. She said the Labor may accept Blinkeviciute or put forward another name for coalition consideration at that time.

#### Parliamentary Musical Chairs?

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14. (U) The New Union, upon withdrawing from the ruling coalition, also relinquished the chairs of three key parliamentary bodies -- the national security and defense committee, audit committee, and the NATO commission. Muntianas announced that negotiations to name new heads of these groups would begin April 14. Commenting on suggestions that the ruling coalition might accept new members, Muntianas remarked that he could imagine various possible combinations, to the exclusion of the Conservatives joining the Government.

#### Party Politics and Betrayals

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15. (C) Conservative Party leader Andrius Kubilius told us he had not expected his call for a vote of no confidence to carry the day. He added that if the NU's partners had voted against the motion or abstained, the four-party coalition would still be intact. Kubilius said initiated the no-confidence motion in order to take a moral stand, but that coalition leaders released their members' votes for other purposes.

16. (C) New Union member Vaclov Stankevic opined that Paulauskas lost the support of the Social Democrats because he and various NU parliamentary committee chairs failed to support Brazauskas on high-profile issues and on matters that were of personal interest to the prime minister. According to Stankevic, Brazauskas never forgave Paulauskas for failing to defend the prime minister against the opposition's charges of unethical conduct and investigations into his family's business transactions. Stankevic went on to say that NU's Sadeckas, as head of the National Security and Defense Committee, pushed too hard to increase defense spending (against the PM's wishes) and was personally too close to Police Commissioner Gregoravicius, nemesis of Juozas Bernatonas, now the PM's advisor on domestic affairs. Additionally, Stankevic said that Skardzius, the NU head of the audit committee worked "as if in the opposition, and was too critical" of Government operations.

17. (C) Claims that the speaker's fall may be closely tied to his personal relationships with his coalition partners are not surprising. Paulauskas kicked up controversy when he publicly questioned Lithuania's role in Iraq despite the GOL's public support for involvement (ref B). In private conversations with the Ambassador, Paulauskas complained about his coalition partner Uspaskich.

#### Summit on Course

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17. (C) Simonas Satunas, an advisor to the President, told us April 13 that the Presidency remains focused on the upcoming Summit rather than on the changes in the government. Satunas said there was significant concern within the president's office about how the international community will perceive this current political turn of events and commented that he

did not expect the Brazauskas or Adamkus to agree to changes that would alter significantly the course of foreign policy. He noted that even through the 2004 presidential impeachment Lithuania had maintained its course.

Comment: Stirred Not Shaken

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[18](#). (C) Although Paulauskas ran for reelection in 2004 in tandem with Brazauskas, he did little to take care of Brazauskas and other people who could protect him politically. Paulauskas' complaints about Uspaskich put him in Labor's sights, and his relationship with the Social Democrats united the two parties in a common cause. When Labor made its latest move to expand its power in the Seimas, Paulauskas was an easy target.

[19](#). (C) Nonetheless, the New Union's loss of power seems to have jiggled rather than shaken the Government. For now, NU's ministers remain in place and the major programs on course and public leaders seem intent that this latest political episode not take on the appearance of high drama. Lithuanian foreign policy so far remains unaffected.  
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